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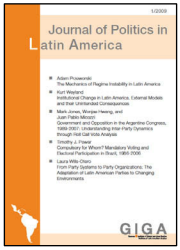

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Parties under Stress: Using a Linkage Decay Framework to Analyze the Chilean Party System

Jana Morgan and Carlos Meléndez

Abstract: Conventional wisdom suggests Chile's party system is highly institutionalized. However, recent declines in participation and partisanship have begun to raise questions about this veneer of stability. This article assesses the current state of the Chilean party system, analyzing its ability to provide linkage. We specify a theoretical framework for identifying challenges to linkage and constraints on necessary adaptation. We then use this framework to evaluate linkage in the contemporary Chilean system, emphasizing how its representational profile has changed since the democratic transition. The analysis suggests the two partisan coalitions no longer present clear policy alternatives and programmatic representation increasingly depends on policy responsiveness and relics of old ideological divides. Significant institutional constraints impede parties' ability to incorporate demands from emerging social groups, and clientelism remains a complementary but not core linkage mechanism. This evidence indicates that while representation in Chile has not yet failed, the system contains serious vulnerabilities.

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Keywords: Latin America, Chile, linkage, party system, representation, programmatic, clientelism, interest incorporation

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Representation is a pivotal element of modern democratic politics. The opportunity to be represented, to have voice or influence in politics, is the essence of democracy. Yet representation is far from even, with considerable variation across countries and between groups. Where representation is effective, citizens are likely to accept the democratic process and outcomes of political contestation. Conversely, representational shortcomings undermine democratic institutions and weaken regime legitimacy. At the extreme, crises of representation contribute to heightened social and political conflict, party system collapse, deinstitutionalization, and regime decay (Mainwaring, Bejarano, and Pizarro Leongómez 2006).

Within contemporary democracies parties are the primary agents of representation. Civic organizations and social movements play a role, but articulating broad interests and implementing effective policies are not typically civil society's central goals. Parties are better positioned, both as bridges between society and state and as agents operating within the state, to give systematic voice to citizens' concerns (Przeworski et al. 1995). Thus, understanding the nature and quality of representation requires careful analysis of parties and the system in which they interact.

Scholars of Latin American politics have dedicated considerable attention to the recent surge of failed representation, decaying parties, and collapsing party systems across the region (e.g. Mainwaring, Bejarano, and Pizarro Leongómez 2006; Morgan 2011). Amid this maelstrom, the Chilean party system – reestablished during the democratic transition nearly three decades ago – has been lauded as an example of not just survival but success. Chile's highly institutionalized party system features parties that offer meaningful programmatic options to voters and represent broad swaths of society through established channels of contestation (Kitschelt et al. 2010; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). However, much of the system's durability and representational capacity is rooted in old modes of competition around the pro- and anti-authoritarian divide and was adapted to specific institutional incentives that characterized transition-focused politics (Siavelis 2016). With old axes of contestation losing relevance and institutions being replaced, the foundations of Chilean party competition have begun to shift, raising questions about how parties and the system as a whole will confront the changing landscape.

Moreover, the veneer of infallibility has begun to crack. Recent studies have pointed to vulnerabilities associated with the pervasiveness of clientelism and the stagnancy of party programs (Luna 2014; Bargsted and Somma 2016). Public opinion surveys reveal that partisan identification eroded steadily from 25.6 percent in 2006 to 13.1 percent in 2014.

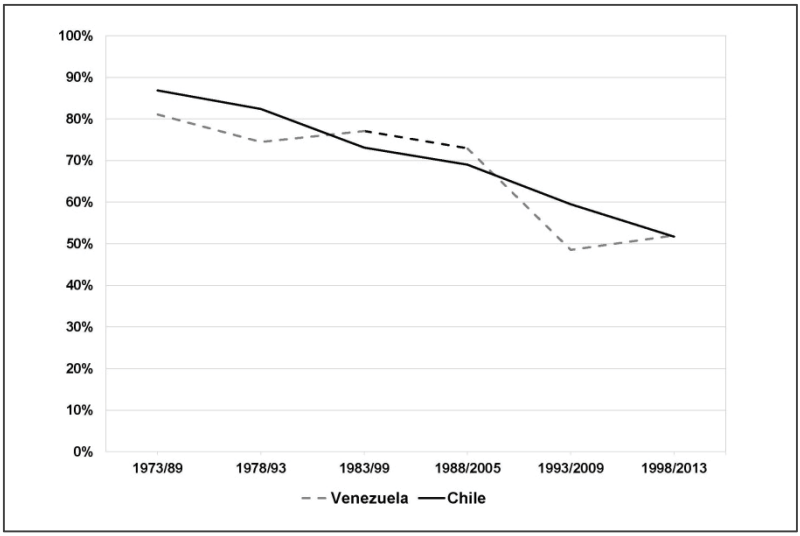
Chile is now among the Latin American countries exhibiting the lowest levels of partisanship, with identification rates comparable to Guatemala and significantly below those in Brazil and Peru – all of which have inchoate party systems with weak parties (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Sánchez 2008; Tanaka 1998).[2] Beyond partisanship, the legitimacy of elections as a mechanism for attaining representation has waned. Figure 1 displays the percentage of the voting-age population that participated in Chile's last six presidential elections. For comparison, the Figure also displays the same statistic for Venezuela for 1973–1998, spanning the six elections up to and including the system's collapse in 1998. The comparable trajectory between participation in contemporary Chile and precollapse Venezuela is striking, with both experiencing significant drops in turnout.[3] Parallelism in these trends suggests that declining political engagement in Chile should be taken seriously as a potential portent of deeper issues.

The comparison with Venezuela hints that declining participation may reflect worrying trends for the party system. In this paper we are interested in understanding whether the observed shifts in party ties and electoral participation are symptoms of a broader process of party system decay in Chile or whether they are more benign, reflecting the maturation of ordinary patterns of partisan competition in an established democracy. To evaluate its underlying stability or vulnerability, we assess how the Chilean system is currently fulfilling its fundamental role of linking society to the state, and we delineate potential challenges to linkage maintenance. Representational shortcomings may provoke party decay and even system collapse (Morgan 2011; Panebianco 1988). Thus, by analyzing linkage here, we are able to illuminate the fundamental features of party politics in contemporary Chile and identify threats that may destabilize the system.

2 Data from the AmericasBarometer.

3 Both countries implemented electoral reforms that altered rules governing compulsory voting, making the institutional dynamics comparable across the two cases. Chile eliminated compulsory voting in 2012, and Venezuela removed all sanctions associated with nonvoting before the 1993 elections. Research suggests these sorts of changes in voting requirements typically result in a five-point decline in turnout (Fornos, Power, and Garand 2004). Thus, it is highly unlikely that the dramatic escalations in abstention observed in Chile and Venezuela can be attributed exclusively to these reforms.

Figure 1. Electoral Participation in Chile and Venezuela



Source: Authors' calculation based on data from Auditoria de la Democracia (Chile) and International Idea (Venezuela).

Linkage and Party System Decay: A Theoretical Framework

The literature is awash with competing normative conceptualizations of representation (Pitkin 1967; Mansbridge 2003). Here we are less concerned with disentangling these varied and, at times, contradictory concepts, which focus on specifying a priori ideals against which to judge representation. Instead, we follow previous empirical research by thinking about representation as a process best understood by assessing the varied linkage strategies that parties employ (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).[4] Emphasizing empirical linkage strategies as opposed to representational ideals facilitates identification of the kinds of linkage employed in the Chilean system and enables the assessment of possible vulnerabilities.

4 The theoretical framework draws upon and extends earlier work developed by Morgan (2011).

Linkage Portfolios

Linkages are the various strategies parties employ to connect society and state, the ways political actors and citizens exchange support and influence (Lawson 1980; Morgan 2011: 38). Parties often employ reinforcing linkage strategies or use different linkage mechanisms to reach distinct constituencies (Luna 2014). Here we focus on three major linkage types identified in the literature as providing something substantive or tangible to supporters: programmatic representation, interest incorporation, and clientelism.[5] Programmatic linkages provide indirect, unconditional benefits available to all through policy responsiveness or ideological positions. Clientelism offers direct, excludable benefits, which individuals or small groups of voters receive in exchange for their support. Incorporation, which may follow corporatist or pluralist logics of interest intermediation, involves integration of major politically-salient societal interests through group-targeted policies and benefits or identity-based appeals to specific sectors (Kitschelt 2000; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Morgan 2011).

As Morgan (2011) points out, many incorporation strategies are not captured effectively under a dichotomous view that considers only programmatic and clientelist linkage. Incorporation tactics such as establishing organizations to promote specific interests, reserving party nominations for representatives of incorporated groups, and granting certain sectors special access to state institutions, "achieve linkage by creating organizational ties or identity-based appeals that involve neither the policy promises associated with programmatic appeals nor the material exchanges associated with clientelism" (Morgan 2011: 40–41). Interparty interactions also shape linkage across the system. Programmatic linkage, for example, is often accomplished when competing parties advocate distinct ideological positions, providing meaningful programmatic alternatives (Morgan 2011: 42). Based on individual parties' tactics and interactions between parties, we can identify the particular combination of linkage strategies at work within a system – that is, its overall linkage portfolio.

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5 We do not separately analyze charisma but instead view charisma as operating *within* a party system as a mechanism for strengthening bonds formed by policy, incorporation, and clientelism. However, without some substance, "charisma does not strengthen party ties, [and] only builds personal followings that compete with party organizations" (Morgan 2011: 41, fn. 4). Therefore, we view party-based charisma as auxiliary to other forms of linkage and extraparty charisma as competing with party-based ties.

Theorizing the Vulnerabilities of Linkage

Knowing a system's linkage portfolio enables one to identify its vulnerabilities with regard to maintaining effective representation as each strategy confronts different challenges to linkage preservation. Parties and party systems must regularly adjust their linkage strategies in response to pressures from a shifting social, economic, and political context (Lawson 1980). Most changes that party systems encounter require small adjustments rather than a substantial reorientation of linkage strategy or logic. Occasionally, however, representational challenges demand significant adaptation. If unresolved, these sorts of challenges may produce the decay or even collapse of parties and party systems. Foundational threats to core linkage strategies open up gaps in linkage, creating significant pressure to adapt or innovate.

While the adaptational strains facing parties and party systems have their origins in a changing social, economic, or political context, responses to these demands are shaped by organizational features and other institutional patterns that facilitate or impede adaptation (Mair 1997). At times, constraints limit appropriate reactions or create incentives for party actors to pursue ineffective responses. Identifying such constraints highlights why successful adaptation is sometimes elusive (Kitschelt 1994; Panebianco 1988). When significant contextual changes put pressure on linkage and organizational constraints impede successful adaptation, substantial linkage gaps are likely to be exposed *and* remain unresolved (Morgan 2011). When linkage deteriorates, parties must fill the gap using some alternative strategy or support will decay. If the representational failure is substantial and linkage decays not only within individual parties but across the entire system, then the party system is likely to collapse.[6] Thus, where contextual changes pose challenges to core linkage strategies but appropriate adaptation is not feasible, parties (or systems) will experience deteriorating linkage, which will produce decaying support.

Delineating Linkage Vulnerabilities

Identifying the particular changes that challenge linkage or the constraints that limit adaptation within a specific party or system depends on the strategies employed. If the pressures parties or systems face threaten their core logic(s) of linkage, then the strains are greater, and adaptation

6 See Morgan 2011 for elaboration of the process through which linkage decay infects entire systems and causes collapse.

is crucial (Carroll and Hannan 1995). Similarly, when necessary adaptation contradicts organizational equilibria, powerful entrenched interests or patterns of decision making may be threatened by attempts to restructure linkage, making adaptation "risky and disruptive" (Morgan 2011: 48; also Kitschelt 1994). Therefore, to specify when linkage decay is likely, we detail the sorts of challenges that most threaten each form of linkage and spell out the constraints that might limit necessary adaptations. In our empirical analysis we apply these parameters to the Chilean party system's linkage portfolio in order to identify relevant vulnerabilities in the system.

Programmatic Representation

Programmatic representation is often regarded as a normatively superior linkage strategy because systems that extend such appeals are more stable and more likely to feature parties that "look after the public interest and [are] responsive to public opinion" (Pitkin 1967: 224). But programmatic linkages are not easy to build and maintain, and a variety of factors may weaken programmatic representation (Kitschelt 1994). Here we identify the sorts of factors that threaten the maintenance of programmatic appeals and specify constraints that limit effective responses to such threats.

It is analytically useful to think of two mechanisms for delivering programmatic representation: policy responses to concerns about which there is widespread public consensus for government action (valence responsiveness) and meaningful ideological/programmatic competition between parties on issues that structure political debate across society (ideological differentiation).[7] While most systems that feature programmatic representation employ both mechanisms, programmatic linkage may be accomplished through one of these avenues alone. Valence responsiveness is accomplished when the governing party or coalition successfully addresses pressing concerns that affect most citizens – for example, by countering an economic downturn, combatting inflation, delivering public services, or ensuring public safety. Profound economic or social crises challenge this facet of programmatic linkage because crises often demand responses that go beyond ordinary policy adjustments and require innovative or complicated solutions. Thus, crises that result from the exhaustion of established policy models are especially threatening because governing parties must pursue policy responses that fall outside their normal repertoire. The ability of governing parties to

7 Morgan 2011: 80. This discussion draws on Morgan 2011, especially chapter 3.

provide effective policy solutions in the face of these kinds of crises may be constrained by international or domestic actors that exercise significant influence over policy making or by the crisis dynamics themselves (e.g. fiscal limitations imposed by economic crises). If constraints like these make viable responses ineffective, unpopular, or in conflict with the government's ideology, then parties may find it difficult to sustain valence responsiveness, and programmatic appeals will decline, costing governing parties electoral support (Morgan 2011: 51–53).

While ineffective responses to valence issues spell decay for governing parties, opposition parties may gain from dissatisfied voters shifting their support away from the government. Such shifts from government to opposition are a common dynamic in stable party systems offering distinct programmatic alternatives. Meaningful programmatic competition occurs when parties in the system stake out clearly differentiated positions on a salient axis of ideological competition. For competition to be meaningful, voters must find distinct options across divides that really matter. For it to be programmatic, these options must pertain to substantive policy differences, not just symbolic or descriptive ones. If such competition exists, then failures in governing responsiveness simply present opportunities to the opposition. However, where systems do not offer meaningful programmatic alternatives, failed policy responsiveness means the end of programmatic linkage across the whole system. We identify two potential paths by which once-programmatic systems may stop offering meaningful policy alternatives.

The first is one of gradual deterioration. Sometimes, programmatic divides lose relevance. Society changes, and old axes of competition are no longer meaningful. Here the challenge to linkage originates in significant shifts in the structures that frame competition, rendering old conflicts peripheral. In such contexts parties are "compelled to embark on the arduous trajectory of devising new programmatic appeals" (Kitschelt et al. 2010: 38–39). Because forging new axes of competition is challenging, parties encounter strong disincentives to pursue potentially risky adaptation, even if the old divide has lost relevance. Inertia motivating a lack of programmatic entrepreneurialism is especially strong during ordinary times, as easy provision of policy responsiveness compensates, at least temporarily, for any loss of meaningful competition; this allows some form of programmatic linkage to persist and promotes a veneer of stability. In fact, the consequences of this sort of programmatic decay are likely hidden until governing crises expose cracks in responsiveness, making the loss of meaningful competition obvious but hard to rectify.

The second path to loss of meaningful programmatic alternatives is one of policy convergence. Convergence occurs when institutional incentives or policy-making patterns encourage parties or party leaders to depart from their organization's ideological moorings and embrace positions that contradict established ideals. Blurring of programmatic distinctions is especially likely when intraparty factionalism creates uncertainty about parties' ideological commitments or when parties from across the ideological spectrum enter governing agreements, such as grand coalitions and pacts. These institutional patterns often emerge in the face of a crisis that demands action and sometimes even reflect efforts to resolve pressing valence concerns. However, as detailed above, such crises also place valence responsiveness at risk. If parties converge or create confusion about their ideological positions in order to resolve a crisis and then fail to accomplish this goal, both forms of programmatic linkage decay (Morgan 2011; Roberts 2014).

Interest Incorporation

Parties may also incorporate major social groups to provide linkage, privileging their policy interests, granting them access to decision making, and extending group-based benefits. Incorporation offers parties stable ties because strong bonds often develop between societal groups and the parties that facilitate their access and influence. But because incorporating linkage is built upon the structure of politically salient cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), shifts in social structure and the politicization of previously dormant identities pose challenges to this linkage strategy (Morgan 2011; Roberts 2003). Processes such as urbanization, immigration, generational shifts, and changes in class structure may promote the growth or political activation of previously insignificant social sectors seeking access to state resources and influence over government policies. When faced with changes either in the structure of society or in the relative salience of different possible cleavages, parties that reflect old social patterns must adapt their strategy to integrate emerging interests, or group-based incorporation will only integrate the shrinking subset of groups linked through established modes of incorporation.

Sometimes parties are able to adjust incorporation strategies to integrate new concerns, but adaptation is not straightforward and entails considerable uncertainty. Parties' organizational structures shape their incentives and capacity to adapt in order to extend incorporation to emerging or newly relevant groups. In general, we expect organizational flexibility to be associated with greater adaptive capacity (Levitsky 2003;

Coppedge 1994; Levitsky 2003). Thus, parties with highly structured organizations are likely to encounter significant constraints on effective responses to social changes.

Moreover, we expect the nature and structure of established interests accustomed to monopolizing incorporation to shape the degree of organizational flexibility and adaptation required for a party to integrate new groups. Where the goals pursued or incorporation tactics employed on behalf of entrenched interests are in harmony with those of emerging groups, integrating new concerns requires less flexibility than in contexts where the aims of established interests or the mechanisms used to incorporate them conflict with those of new groups. If existing incorporation strategies do not align with the goals or organizational logics of emergent groups, reaching out to new interests requires innovations that demand investments of time, resources, and creative energy in exchange for uncertain outcomes (Greene 2007). As a result, where old and new come into conflict, parties may elect to avoid risky efforts to integrate new interests (Carroll and Hannan 1995). In sum, parties may experience narrowing incorporation when shifts in the structure or salience of social divides are met with party organizations that lack flexibility, particularly when the strategies or appeals appropriate for integrating new interests conflict with existing mechanisms for incorporating established supporters.

Clientelism

While clientelism is frequently considered an inferior form of linkage, clientelist ties deliver some benefit to voters and permit basic linkage between people and the state (Kitschelt 2000). Party-based clientelism depends on parties having adequate access to resources they can exchange for support. With sufficient resources to satisfy demand, clientelism offers surprisingly stable linkage. However, when voters connect to the state primarily through clientelist ties, they often prioritize highly individual interests and have short time horizons. Therefore, if the supply of clientelist resources is inadequate to satisfy demand, people withdraw their support and become disenchanted. Inability to deliver clientelist exchanges may even arouse suspicions that lost benefits are being siphoned off to profit someone else, raising alarms about corruption (Morgan forthcoming a). Given these features, clientelism is particularly vulnerable to supply-and-demand mismatches stemming from intensifying petitions for clientelist exchanges or constraints on adequate or efficient benefit distribution (Piattoni 2001).

Challenges to clientelist linkage are rooted in the pressure for more resources to be able to satisfy demand. These escalating resource pressures may result from demands for an increased quantity of exchanges or increased costs per exchange. Several types of factors may generate increased demand for clientelist resources. Social changes may heighten demand by either expanding the ranks of those seeking material benefits in exchange for their vote (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Piattoni 2001) or increasing the outlay required to successfully attract support through clientelism (Lyne 2008). The exchanges required may escalate when poverty or economic uncertainty grows, as people experiencing these conditions may turn to clientelism to satisfy their immediate needs rather than hope for future programmatic changes that could (but will not necessarily) improve their situations (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Piattoni 2001). Conversely, economic development motivates clients to require more expensive benefits in exchange for their support (Lyne 2008). Institutional restructuring also has the potential to generate pressure for more clientelist outlays. For instance, reforms that increase the number of separate electoral contests or that encourage a shift toward more candidate-centered elections may proliferate the number of separate clientelist benefits needed. Finally, decay in other forms of linkage could heighten demand for clientelism if voters try to extract some benefit from parties instead (Morgan 2011).

Escalating demand for clientelism requires that parties make additional investments, otherwise they risk alienating voters. Parties that encounter resource constraints in the face of heightened demand are likely to experience deteriorating linkage capacity and potentially suffer accusations of corruption from clientelist-seeking voters with unmet demands. Constraints on clientelist resources are often imposed by economic crises, which restrict public and private funds for clientelism (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Lyne 2008). Additionally, reforms that limit partisan control over state resources (e.g. professionalization of the bureaucracy) or undermine the efficiency of clientelist distribution (e.g. fiscal reforms that reduce the flow of party-controlled resources) may constrain parties' abilities to satisfy demand. Similarly, reforms that implement new institutions or create different organizational incentives may result in misspent funds or misdirected exchanges. If economic constraints or institutional reforms limit the quantity or efficiency of clientelist distribution at the same time that demand intensifies, clientelist capacity will decay. Among those who seek but do not receive benefits, "clientelism loses its acceptance because it ceases to provide widespread linkage between society and the state, and instead enriches a select few

who benefit" (Morgan 2011: 67). In the section that follows, we apply this linkage decay framework to assess the quality and durability of linkage in the Chilean party system.

Analyzing Challenges to Linkage in Contemporary Chile

Since the democratic transition almost 30 years ago, the Chilean party system has featured a multifaceted linkage profile. This has consisted of programmatic appeals, which have played the most important role (Ortega 2003); the incorporation of major social groups, particularly capitalist classes, religious interests, and to a lesser extent organized labor (Rehrén 1995; Schneider 2004); and the limited use of clientelist appeals to attract support from those not captured by the dominant programmatic model or group-based incorporation (Rehrén 1995). We discuss these three linkage types in turn, outlining the contours of each strategy in the posttransition system and detailing potential challenges confronting each linkage strategy within the contemporary context.

Diminished Programmatic Representation despite Continued Demand

Scholars have frequently characterized programmatic representation in Chile as robust (Kitschelt et al. 2010; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). In addition to effective valence responsiveness through the provision of strong macroeconomic performance and effective public safety policies, the Chilean system has long been regarded as one of the most programmatically structured party systems in Latin America. Within the system partisan competition has occurred between two coalitions, the *Alianza*[8] and the *Nueva Mayoría* (formerly the *Concertación*), which organize parties according to their positions on two largely coinciding programmatic divisions: a democratic–authoritarian axis and a left–right axis (see table 1 for the composition of each alliance over time). The first of these axes divided the coalitions according to their views on the former authoritarian regime and their stances toward maintaining or unraveling the regime's institutional and cultural legacies. The *Alianza* had strong ties to the authoritarian regime and sought to protect its legacy, while the par-

8 In 2015 former members of the *Alianza* (UDI and RN) and relatively new parties (Evopoli and Partido Regionalista Independiente) formed a new version of the center-right coalition, called Chile Vamos.

ties composing the *Nueva Mayoría* opposed authoritarianism (Luna 2014; Torcal and Mainwaring 2003). This authoritarian–democracy divide roughly coincides with the left–right divide: the antiauthoritarian *Nueva Mayoría* has typically been associated with a left-leaning position, supporting a generous welfare state and more government involvement in the economy, whereas the proauthoritarian, right-leaning *Alianza* has favored a leaner welfare state and limited government. Voter behavior reflects the electoral relevance of these programmatic divides (Bargsted and Somma 2016). Here we assess the present status of and challenges to valence responsiveness and party system structuration in contemporary Chile.

Valence policy responsiveness is accomplished when the governing party or coalition successfully addresses the pressing concerns affecting most of the population. We employ approval ratings for national administrations correlated with approval ratings for specific issues as proxies for incumbents' responsiveness.

Table 1. Left and Right Party Constellations, 1989–2013

Year	Left Coalition	Others (Left)
1989	DC, PS, PPD, PR, IC	PC
1993	DC, PS, PPD, PR	PC
1999	DC, PS, PPD, PRSD	PC
2005	DC, PS, PPD, PRSD	PC, IC
2009	DC, PS, PPD, PRSD	PC, IC, MEO (Ind)
2013	DC, PS, PPD, IC, PC	MEO (PRO)

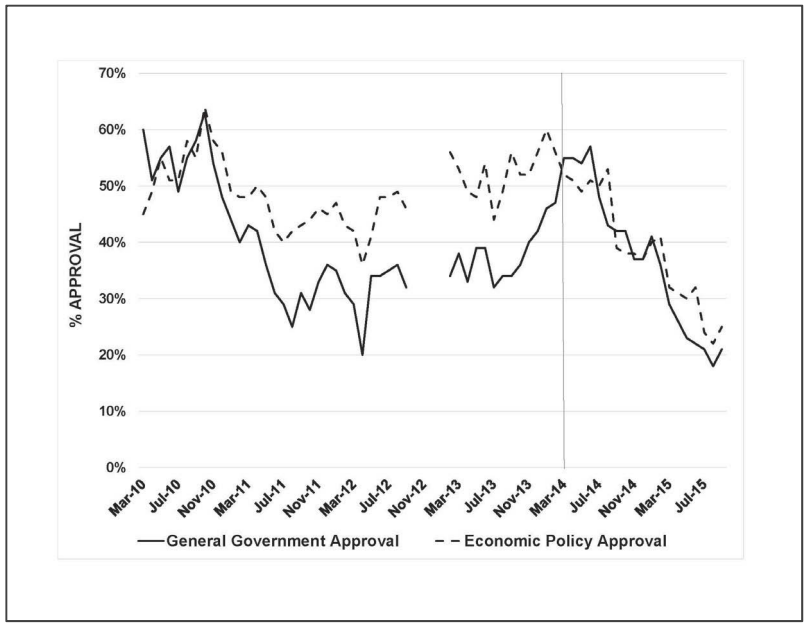
Year	Right Coalition	Others (Right)
1989	UDI, RN	PN, SUR, UCC
1993	UDI, RN, PN, SUR, UCC	
1999	UDI, RN	
2005	UDI, RN	
2009	UDI, RN, CP	
2013	UDI, RN	

Note: DC = Partido Demócrata Cristiano; PS = Partido Socialista; PPD = Partido por la Democracia; PR = Partido Radical; IC = Partido Izquierda Cristiana; PRSD = Partido Radical Social Demócrata; PC=Partido Comunista; MEO = Marco Enríquez-Ominami; PRO = Partido Progresista; UDI = Unión Demócrata Independiente; RN = Renovación Nacional; PN = Partido Nacional; SUR = Partido del Sur; UCC = Unión de Centro Centro; CP = Chile Primero.

Based on analysis of monthly approval ratings, we identify some evidence of emerging dissatisfaction with government's valence responsiveness. Government approval ratings have fallen considerably over the last two presidential administrations: under Piñera approval was at 39 percent, while under Bachelet – who left office after her first term with

almost 80 percent approval – approval has bottomed out at 37 percent (see Figure 2). Both administrations share similarly poor assessments despite the presidents hailing from competing coalitions, suggesting that Chileans' evaluations have become increasingly critical regardless of the leadership's partisan affinity.

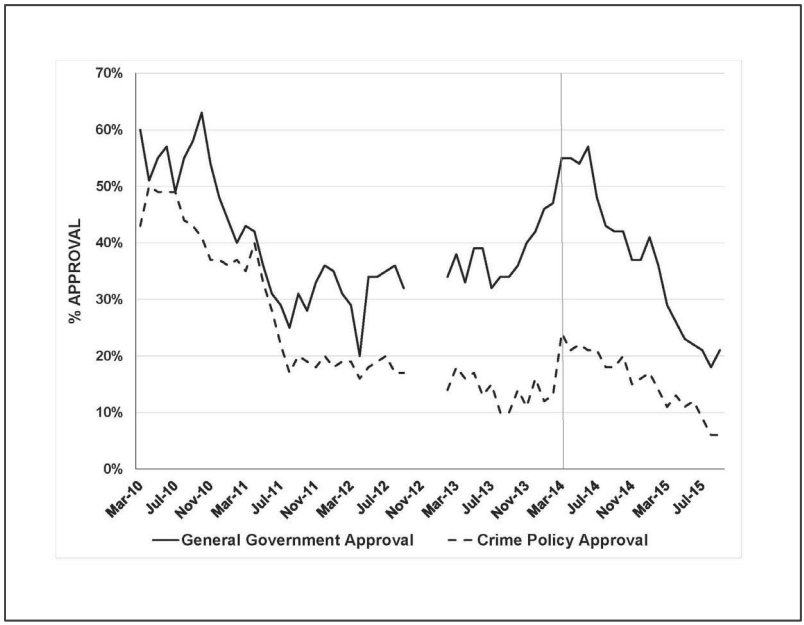
Figure 2. Government Approval and Economic Policy Evaluations (March 2010–September 2015)



Source: GFK Adimark.

Note: Correlations between the two series are 0.69 under Piñera and 0.94 under Bachelet. There is no data for the period October 2012–January 2013.

Figure 3. Government Approval and Public Security Evaluations (March 2010–September 2015)



Source: GFK Adimark's nationally representative surveys.

Note: Correlations between the two series are 0.74 under Piñera and 0.95 under Bachelet. There is no data for the period October 2012–January 2013.

To assess public perceptions of responsiveness, we consider evaluations of government efforts in two traditionally important arenas: the economy and public safety.[9] Despite comparatively strong economic performance and low crime rates for the region, Chileans' evaluations of the government's economic policy and security efforts have deteriorated notably in recent years (see Figures 2 and 3). Moreover, correlations between assessments of government policy efforts in these arenas specifically and of government performance overall have increased markedly; in fact, they are in near lockstep under the current Bachelet administra-

9 According to the November 2015 CEP survey, 58 percent of respondents considered public safety the country's principal problem, and five issues related to the economy (salaries, poverty, employment, inequality and inflation) were among the 10 most important problems.

tion.[10] These patterns suggest that assessments of policy responsiveness in these important issue areas are deteriorating at the same time that they are becoming increasingly correlated with government performance evaluations, making the link between valence responsiveness and (low) incumbent legitimacy tighter and more damaging to the governing coalition.

Therefore, while objective performance on economic and public safety indicators remains strong by regional comparisons and not particularly poor even according to Chile's recent legacy of favorable performance, citizen perceptions of the government's effectiveness in these arenas have deteriorated. If valence responsiveness is viewed as increasingly inadequate in this good-performance context, maintaining this sort of linkage is certainly vulnerable to the challenges that would be imposed by a serious economic or security crisis, particularly one that threatened the established policy consensus or contradicted the fundamental logic of policy making. Moreover, because both *Alianza* and *Nueva Mayoría* governments have experienced these deteriorating performance evaluations, citizens view the system's dominant coalitions as falling short in terms of effective policy making. Thus, the decline in valence responsiveness has occurred at the system level rather than being isolated to a single party or coalition.

Potential damage to overall programmatic representation may be mitigated if poor responsiveness on important issues occurs within a party system that maintains meaningful programmatic alternatives to which dissatisfied voters may turn. Since Chile's return to democracy in 1990, the *Alianza* and the *Nueva Mayoría* coalitions have been the dominant electoral players, demonstrating a capacity to renew their alliances and integrate potential third-party organizations. As discussed above, these two coalitions have traditionally competed across two reinforcing axes of contestation: a democracy–authoritarian divide and a left–right divide.

However, in the past decade two major changes have begun to raise questions about the degree to which the two competing sets of parties continue to offer meaningful programmatic alternatives on issues of importance for most voters. Moreover, this loss of programmatic differentiation has occurred in a context where most Chileans seem to prefer ideological linkages as their mechanism for connecting to parties. From 1995 to 2009 the percentage of the population that identified with the

10 Public safety and economic evaluations correlate with Bachelet's approval ratings at 0.95 and 0.94 respectively, while these correlations were 0.74 and 0.69 under Piñera.

left–right scale fluctuated between 82 percent and 65 percent (Bargsted and Somma 2016), with higher levels corresponding with national election years. These data suggest that for the majority, the conventional ideological continuum is the main reference for electoral choice, emphasizing the crucial role this sort of representation plays in sustaining the Chilean system's linkage capacity.

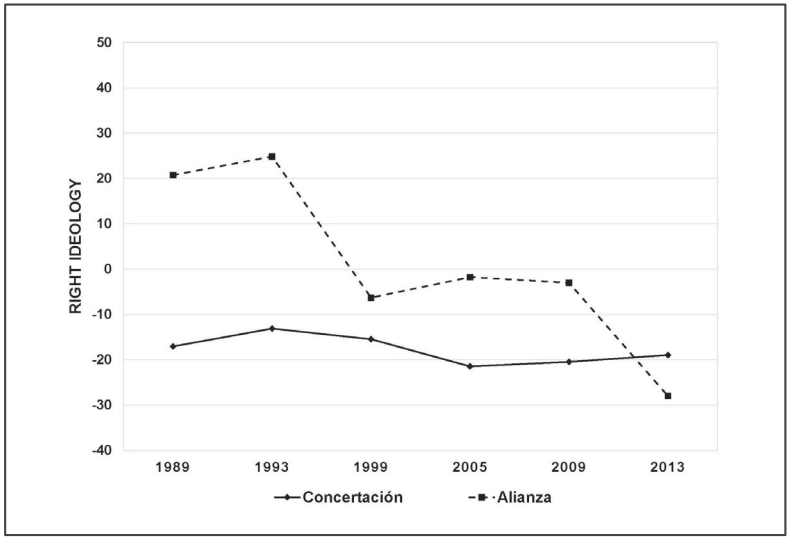
However, both axes of programmatic representation have experienced declining linkage capacity. First, the authoritarian–democracy divide has lost relevance. Time and generational replacement have reduced the poignancy of the old conflicts from the authoritarian period (Luna and Mardones 2010). Moreover, a graduated process of reform has dismantled many of the authoritarian regime's institutional legacies while sustaining its general economic framework, effectively depoliticizing many debates that characterized this axis of competition (Lacewell, Madariaga, and Rovira Kaltwasser 2016). As a result, the fact that the *Alianza* is identified with the dictatorship and the *Nueva Mayoría* with the democratic opposition no longer carries much significance for policy or for voters, which weakens the relevance of this divide for understanding programmatic structuration in the system (Bargsted and Somma 2016; Luna and Altman 2011).

Second, the two coalitions have experienced ideological convergence on the traditional left–right axis. This process is readily apparent in Figure 4, which depicts the ideological placement of the coalitions' campaign platforms in the first round of every presidential election since the transition. The data are drawn from the Comparative Manifestos project, which uses text analysis to systematically code the ideological content of every quasi sentence in the presidential platforms. These phrase-level codes are then aggregated to construct the RILE index of left–right ideology (Budge et al. 2001).[11] The Figure illustrates the emergence of an ideological consensus that makes it difficult to distinguish between the coalitions' articulated programmatic positions. In fact, during the 2013 presidential campaign, the *Alianza* platform shifted slightly to the left of the *Concertación*, reflecting the *Alianza*'s rhetorical emphasis on education reform. Without education in the index, the coalitions' scores are nearly the same. Moreover, ideological convergence has occurred across nearly all policy areas included in the index, ranging from social policy to infrastructure investment to views of the market. The only dimension on which the parties remain somewhat distinct in their public manifestos is

11 The codes consist of 76 policy subcategories, including the 56 traditionally used in analyzing western European manifestos and the 20 additional categories particular to Latin America (Lehman et al. 2015).

the low-salience democracy–authoritarianism divide (Lacewell, Madariaga, and Rovira Kaltwasser 2016).

Figure 4. Ideology of *Concertación* and *Alianza* Campaign Platforms, 1989–2013



Note: Lines depict right ideology of the two major coalitions using the RILE index calculated based on presidential candidates' campaign platforms collected and coded by the Comparative Manifestos project. The theoretical range of the index is -100 to 100 and is based on coding manifesto quasi-sentences into 76 categories, including the 56 traditionally used in manifesto analysis of western Europe as well as 20 additional categories focused on the Latin American context (Lehman et al. 2015). The 2005 estimate for *Alianza* is the score for Piñera (RN) who advanced to the second round.

At the same time, each coalition's programmatic identity has become more ambiguous as internal disputes have become more frequent and more public (Luna and Altman 2011: 17–19). Among the clearest examples of these eruptions of factionalism are independent presidential candidacies, such as those by former Partido Socialista members, Marco Enríquez-Ominami and Jorge Arrate; defections by congressional deputies from the Partido Demócrata Cristiano to the right; and discord between and within the Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI) and the Renovación Nacional (RN) over strategic and programmatic issues (Luna and Mardones 2010: 109–112; Luna 2014). Displays of factionalism and defections across old ideological battle lines often create uncertainty

about parties' or coalitions' ideological commitments and obscure programmatic differences (Morgan 2011).

Despite programmatic convergence and factionalism blurring the coalitions' ideological identities, citizens and even experts continue to see the coalitions' presidential candidates as ideologically distinct. Based on data from public opinion surveys conducted by the Centro de Estudios Públicos (CEP) and reported in table 2, Chileans have located *Alianza* candidates significantly to the right of *Concertación* nominees in the last two presidential elections. On a conventional left–right scale ranging from 1 (left) to 10 (right), the average placement for the *Alianza* nominee was 8.3 in 2009 (Sebastian Piñera) and 8.7 in 2013 (Evelyn Matthei) compared to 4.3 in 2009 (Eduardo Frei) and 3.6 in 2013 (Michelle Bachelet) for the *Concertación* nominee. Thus, legacies of left–right differentiation continue to shape voters' expectations of policy from the two coalitions even though their current policy positions no longer reflect much differentiation. Similarly, experts and elites have continued to see the Chilean parties as at least somewhat ideologically distinct.

Table 2. Ideological Placement of Presidential Candidates, 2009 and 2013

Year	Candidate	Political Party / Coalition	Average Ideology
2009	Sebastián Piñera	UDI/*Alianza*	8.34
	Eduardo Frei	PDC/*Concertación*	4.27
	Marco Enríquez-Ominami	Independent	4.49
	Median voter		5.32
	N=1505		
Year	**Candidate**	**Political Party / Coalition**	**Average Ideology**
2013	Evelyn Matthei	UDI/*Alianza*	8.74
	Michelle Bachelet	PS/*Nueva Mayoría*	3.56
	Marco Enríquez-Ominami	PRO	4.18
	Median voter		5.02
	N=1437		

Source: Author calculations based on nationally representative surveys conducted by CEP. Ideology is measured on a 10-point scale; higher scores indicate more right-leaning positions. Differences between the *Alianza* and the *Concertación* are statistically significant in both years.

Data from Duke University's Democracy and Accountability Project and the Parliamentary Elites in Latin America survey identified a moderate degree of polarization between Chilean parties, as defined by experts and partisan politicians, respectively (Singer 2016 and authors' calculations).[12]

12 We emphasize two important precautions concerning the relevance of these data sources for our purposes. First, these measures are calculated with refer-

In the short term these increasingly unfounded perceptions of meaningful programmatic alternatives may permit stability. But in the medium term the declining relevance of the authoritarian–democracy divide and the fading differentiation on the more salient left–right axis threaten the major coalitions' ability to secure support through programmatic differentiation. At the same time that programmatic differentiation along the traditional left-right divide has declined, anti-establishment appeals have gained a foothold among a significant proportion of the electorate. The fading ideological differentiation, the growing "social distance" between the elites and the mass public (Luna 2016), and recent corruption scandals involving the entire political class have nurtured anti-establishment sentiments that are coalesced around populist appeals that largely exist outside of political parties (Meléndez and Rovira 2016). The electorate seems to be divided between those who still support traditional parties' candidates and those who are willing to opt for a new political offer.

Thus, while Chile maintains a stellar reputation for its highly programmatic party system, the evidence here raises cause for concern. Administrations controlled by both coalitions have failed to respond effectively to their mandates on important valence issues, and programmatic differentiation has faded, reducing the ideological options available to voters. Despite this rather bleak scenario concerning the status of programmatic representation, some evidence suggests that programmatic appeals have not vanished entirely. For instance, the Chilean electorate, which appears to favor programmatic appeals as their primary form of linkage, continues to perceive ideological differentiation and to vote in overwhelming majorities for the two major political coalitions; thus far, the two coalitions have adapted to the emergence of third-party forces by renewing their pacts. However, accomplishing programmatic representation based on the tattered legacies of past successes in providing valence responsiveness or on the remaining shreds of programmatic differentiation places this form of linkage under significant strain.

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ence to individual parties, not the two coalitions that have dominated electoral options. The coalitions tend to close the ideological space between individual parties. Second, the surveys reflect the perceptions of experts and partisan politicians, not the policy options that are communicated to the electorate. For these reasons, we treat this information with less confidence than we do the manifesto data.

Fragile Interest Incorporation

The Chilean party system also historically accomplished linkage via group-based incorporation strategies that reflected traditional class and religious divides. Before the 1973 coup, Chilean parties played a crucial role in organizing societal interests, thus forming the "backbone" of Chilean society (Garretón 1989). Incorporated groups included the capitalist classes (industry, finance, and agribusiness), represented by the right; religious interests, represented by the Christian Democrats and some elements of the right; the traditional middle class, represented by centrist parties; labor and urban popular sectors, represented by the Socialists and Communists; and rural peasants, represented by Christian democracy (Garretón 1989; Scully 1992). But under authoritarianism repression and neoliberalism severed many of the ties parties had maintained with urban and rural popular sectors and shifted the class structure, shrinking organized labor and commodifying the rural peasantry (Garretón 1989; Luna 2014). Moreover, as the negotiated democratic transition took shape, Christian Democrats and Socialists faced strong incentives to demobilize their social bases in order to facilitate and sustain democratization (Oxhorn 1995; Posner 2004; Somma 2012: 297).

As a result of these shifts in class structure and in the elite-controlled political landscape, posttransition interest incorporation had become less vibrant and encompassing than traditionally conceived (Luna and Altman 2011; Posner 1999). The capitalist classes and, to a lesser extent, religious interests remain effectively articulated by the *Alianza* and the Christian Democrats, respectively, whereas organized labor finds some incorporation through the left. However, unionization rates have declined and now stand at less than 15 percent (Dirección del Trabajo 2014), meaning that many Chileans are located in the precarious or aspiring middle class, which does not have access to effective group-based incorporation (see Barozet and Espinoza 2016). Moreover, neoliberalism removed targeted policy appeals like land reform from the political agenda and transformed the peasantry into unsettled seasonal laborers, resulting in the dismantling of associational networks that linked rural workers to left parties (Kurtz 2004). Partisan ties to the urban popular sectors were weakened under authoritarian rule and eviscerated through the transition process as leaders of the *Concertación* sought to preserve pacted democracy and prevent the kind of mobilization that had destabilized pre-Pinochet politics (Posner 1999, 2004). Thus, changes in the class structure together with the nature of Chile's elite-negotiated democracy (which imposes serious constraints on any *Concertación* efforts to reinvigorate organizational ties to the base) has produced a pattern of group

incorporation that privileges upper-class concerns and is detached from and often seeks to demobilize significant sectors of society (Posner 1999). Elites are responsible for securing the balance of power and horizontal accountability, but they lack any organizational or institutional vehicles to connect with emerging social demands. This dynamic has consolidated a political system with no vertical accountability (Luna 2016).

In addition to increasingly marginalized urban and rural popular classes, indigenous communities and young people are also unlikely to find partisan expression of their interests. Traditional modes of incorporation and programmatic representation did not consider these groups, and party organizational strategies based on class cleavages are poorly aligned to articulate or integrate their concerns. These groups' alienation is evidenced by low levels of participation in conventional political practices and their reliance on nonconventional forms of expression. As noted above, overall levels of abstention have increased markedly in Chile, but younger cohorts and indigenous communities have been particularly disengaged. Young people often opted out of the old electoral system, which placed obligatory voting requirements only on those who chose to register as voters. At the transition, one-third of those on the electoral registry were under 30 years old; however, by 2009 young people accounted for only 10.9 percent of registered voters despite constituting 18 percent of the population (Contreras and Navia 2013: 427). Even after controlling for other factors, age remains significantly related to lower registration rates (Contreras and Navia 2013). These patterns, which have been noted as a sign of political disaffection (Luna and Altman 2010), prompted reforms designed to reinvigorate turnout by establishing automatic registration and eliminating compulsory voting.

However, since the reform implementation in 2012, participation rates have continued to decline (Barnes and Rangel 2014), and young people remain disproportionately unlikely to vote (Achtenberg 2014). Electoral participation among indigenous communities is also low. Average participation in the 10 *comunas* with the largest concentration of indigenous residents was significantly below the nationwide average in the 2013 election. In some of these communities, particularly those in the north (i.e. Colchane, Camarones, and Ollague), effective participation rates are more than 20 percentage points below the national average. While the self-identified indigenous constitute no more than 10 percent of Chile's population, their political marginalization is extreme. Since 1924, only eight legislators have given descriptive voice to this population, and successive democratic governments have failed to satisfy de-

mands related to recognizing Mapuche territorial and political rights (Bidegain 2017).

Table 3. Electoral Participation in Most Indigenous *Comunas*, 2013 (in %)

Comuna	Region	Indigenous Population	Electoral Participation
Colchane	Tarapacá	78.1	21.7
Camiña	Tarapacá	75.1	50.7
General Lagos	Arica y Parinacota	62.0	76.5
Camarones	Arica y Parinacota	61.6	27.2
Ollague	Antofogasta	67.3	15.1
San Pedro de Atacama	Antofogasta	60.9	47.9
Isla de Pascua	Valparaíso	60.7	39.5
Saavedra	La Araucanía	64.3	46.9
San Juan de la Costa	Los Lagos	59.4	54.9
Galvarino	La Araucanía	59.2	52.2
Average for 10 most indigenous *comunas*			43.3
Average without General Lagos			39.6
Nationwide			49.4

Source: Author's calculations based on data from <www.servel.cl/>. Indigenous population estimates from INE.

Note: Participation indicates share of eligible voters who cast effective ballots.

The young and those in indigenous communities have increasingly expressed their frustration through protest. Social conflicts have emerged in relation to indigenous rights and student demands, with both groups questioning the dominant neoliberal model and their exclusion from institutional processes of incorporation (Somma 2012; Somma and Medel 2017). Indigenous communities and environmental activists have joined cause to oppose various development projects, including commercial forestry, transportation infrastructure, hydroelectric dams, and mining – all of which threaten indigenous territories and degrade the environment (Aylwin 2000; Carruthers and Rodriguez 2009). Likewise, students have initiated two major protest waves, mobilizing some 20,000 students in 2006 and 50,000–100,000 in 2011 (Palacios forthcoming; Somma 2012). Unlike the indigenous protestors, student demands provoked some reaction from the traditional parties, with both major coalitions giving them some rhetorical attention (Somma and Medel 2017). However, despite some ties between the student movement and the left, the parties have been largely unwilling to enact substantive education reforms addressing student concerns, which has only intensified the divide between students and the establishment (Palacios forthcoming).

While a few student leaders have made successful forays into the electoral arena, they have done so only at the margins of the traditional party system – none of the core parties from either coalition have integrated them into their ranks. Additionally, unlike the indigenous and environmental movements, the student protesters represent a rapidly expanding segment of the population, and their demands capture issues of immediate relevance for numerous Chilean families who have had, currently have, or anticipate having children attend university (Somma 2012).[13]

The resurgent waves of protest from sectors who find neither targeted policy solutions addressing their demands nor organizational ties to parties reflect the underlying weaknesses of interest incorporation in the Chilean system. While failure to incorporate these interests will not inevitably lead to the immediate demise of the parties, their inability to integrate these movements points to a broader problem in which the dominant, more corporatist, class-based logic of interest integration fundamentally contradicts more pluralist logics that might facilitate incorporation for broader segments of society. As a result, the youngest cohorts and traditionally excluded ethnic groups are increasingly detached from the formal mechanisms of representation. These social groups have not found meaningful representation among the traditional coalitions, and recent research has found that negative partisan identification and anti-establishment identities are more prevalent among 18- to 25-year-olds (Meléndez and Rovira 2016). Moreover, the parties' elitist structures, which privilege demobilization and preservation of the status quo, are poorly equipped to channel pressures emanating from these marginalized groups (Luna 2014; Somma 2012). In its current form group-based incorporation is unlikely to provide much of a backstop to preserve linkage if programmatic appeals were to fail.

Clientelism as Complement, Not Core

Chile ranks among the Latin American countries with the lowest share of people who have been exposed to vote-buying attempts.[14] In the 2014 AmericasBarometer survey, only 3.6 percent of Chileans reported having personally received or observed an offer to exchange a vote for some material benefit, positioning Chile and Costa Rica as the countries with the lowest levels of vote-buying activity (Morgan and Espinal 2015: 208).

13 Between 1990 and 2010 tertiary education coverage expanded from 16 percent to 40 percent for the 18–24 age group (Somma 2012: 298).

14 Although we use vote-buying as a proxy for the prevalence of clientelism, we are aware that other features of clientelism are present in Chile (e.g. patronage).

The country also scores low in expert surveys and other scholarly assessments of clientelist efforts (Kitschelt and Altamirano 2015). Nevertheless, clientelism has helped generate stable linkage for some groups in Chilean politics. Historically, political machines forged enduring connections between the state and citizens, especially at the subnational level (Valenzuela 1977). Since the return to democracy, increasing social inequality has motivated parties to deploy different types of electoral appeals, combining programmatic and clientelist strategies to mobilize distinct constituencies (Luna 2014). For example, the UDI has used its access to private funding to exercise segmented, but nationally integrated, electoral strategies that involve clientelist exchanges targeted at its noncore constituencies (low-income) and programmatic appeals to its traditional following (conservative middle classes) (Luna 2014; Posner 2004: 74). Thus, clientelism has been deployed to capture support from those whose interests are not reflected in the dominant programmatic debates or group-based appeals, such as the urban and rural poor (Kurtz 2004; Luna 2014; Posner 2004). But clientelism is not the primary form of linkage for most Chileans, rendering it a complementary, not core, linkage strategy.

Survey data collected after the 2009 general elections suggests vote-buying in Chile reinforces established parties by concentrating resources among partisans.[15] According to the data, 5.4 percent of Chileans have been involved in vote-buying activities, and this percentage is higher among party militants (8.2 percent) than nonmilitants (5.1 percent) and among strong partisan identifiers (7.6 percent) versus independents (5.2 percent). This suggests that although clientelism in Chile is not widespread, clientelist appeals have been developed through parties and reinforce partisan attachments.

Further qualitative and quantitative evidence similarly emphasizes how clientelist linkages have been employed by Chilean parties to foster their base (Arraigada 2013; Fuentes and de Cea forthcoming). Clientelism plays an effective role in connecting elites to their constituencies, facilitating control of social unrest, and providing a minimal form of linkage among otherwise excluded groups like ethnic minorities (Durston 2009). Fuentes and de Cea (forthcoming) report the emergence of a new "professionalized strategy" in which political brokers play a more auton-

15 A nationally representative survey was conducted in January 2010 as part of the Vote-Buying in the Americas project (by Ezequiel González-Ocantos, Chad Kiwiet de Jonge, Carlos Meléndez, David Nickerson, and Javier Osori). Its questions focused on vote-buying activities, which we use as a proxy for clientelism.

omous role in comparison to traditional partisan clientelist methods. These new methods, however, do not weaken the centrality of parties as the dominant actors in the exchange (Durston 2009). Even antiparty or outsider rhetoric associated with emergent clientelist actors does not seem to affect mechanisms of reelection since clientelist competition occurs along partisan lines (Díaz et al. 2006).

However, escalating demands for clientelist exchange places pressure on this linkage strategy. When the population seeking material benefits in exchange for their vote expands or makes regular conditional exchanges more expensive, parties encounter resource pressure to continue this practice. In Chile vote-buying is targeted in similar proportions across income levels. The percentage of people involved in this type of exchange is similar among the very poor (5.5 percent), poor (4.8 percent), and middle/upper classes (5.8 percent) (Nickerson et al. 2013). The fact that middle-/upper-income households are targeted by clientelism together with the steady reduction of people in poverty (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social 2013) implies more expensive distributions. Moreover, if other linkage strategies decline, the parties may encounter increasing demands for clientelist exchanges as a substitute. Such pressures could place new strains on clientelism, which would require additional resource investments through greater reliance on private funding (as reported in Luna 2014 and Posner 2005) or excessive manipulation of state resources. However, recent corruption scandals (e.g. Penta and SQM) involving party funding strategies may constrain the future of such practices.

Conclusions: The Vulnerabilities of Chilean Linkage

Our analysis suggests that the ongoing period of political upheaval and party system decay in Chile should not yet be catalogued as the complete bankruptcy of democratic representation, which would lead to the collapse of the party system. However, there is considerable cause for concern as evidence suggests there are certain vulnerabilities in the linkage profile, which the party system has thus far not moved to address. Effective valence policy responsiveness has decayed considerably during the last two governments, and poor approval ratings are increasingly associated with critiques of economic and public security policies. As the authoritarian regime's legacy fades, the old regime-based cleavage has lost much of its programmatic relevance. Moreover, a policy consensus around a modified version of neoliberalism has emerged since the transi-

tion, producing ideological convergence between the two coalitions and constricting the set of programmatic options.

In this context maintenance of programmatic linkage depends on effective valence responsiveness, which appears weak and vulnerable to serious crises that cannot be resolved through established policy-making strategies. Moreover, the escalation of existing divisions within the extant coalitions would further undermine the already-frayed programmatic structuration. Despite these programmatic shortcomings, the traditional parties and the two coalitions in which they compete continue to control most of the votes, managing to retain electoral support from a population that overwhelmingly favors programmatic representation.

As programmatic linkage loses status as the hallmark of the Chilean party system, pressure on other forms of linkage may intensify. Yet these linkage strategies presently seem ill-equipped to shoulder this burden. We have identified the fragility of interest incorporation, which primarily reinforces extant ideological divides without compensating for potential programmatic deficiencies. The parties have been unable to accommodate growing pressures from the younger cohort of voters who joined the voter rolls after the recent wave of electoral reforms. Younger voters did not experience the polarizing authoritarian era and face job markets that render them unemployed at rates nearly three times that of older adults (OECD 2015), which effectively excludes them from the employment structure upon which class-based appeals have traditionally been constructed. The younger cohort's interests and ethnic minorities' demands – although mobilized through street protests – have yet to be incorporated by the political establishment, which is primarily structured to integrate traditional class cleavages that lack salience among these groups. While incorporation could be expanded to these groups, doing so would likely require a shift toward a more pluralist system of interest articulation. Revising interest-based representation in this way would require considerable adaptation as it would mark a significant departure from the extant corporatist logic, which was set in place by the transition and continues to be incentivized by the elite-negotiated policy-making apparatus.

Finally, while clientelism has served to reinforce other partisan linkage strategies, such exchange-based ties appear to benefit only a small share of the population. Moreover, scaling up clientelism would require not only hefty resource investments but also significant restructuring of the parties' current logic of segmented representation (Luna 2014), which seeks to conceal clientelist exchange. Such a process could open

the system up to further accusations of corruption and influence peddling.

Overall, the Chilean party system appears to be under stress. While we do not yet observe the complete bankruptcy of representation observed in contexts of party system collapse, the system's linkage portfolio is far from robust. Programmatic appeals have deteriorated and seem vulnerable to further decay, and alternative linkages through incorporation and clientelism are not encompassing enough to fill this potential void. Although programmatic rejuvenation is possible and the parties could expand interest incorporation and clientelism, significant organizational disincentives and resource obstacles make navigating these paths fraught with challenges. Moreover, the detection of sharp anti-establishment sentiments among the youngest cohorts of the electorate complicates the emergence of a pluralist intermediation system that integrates their concerns through system-based mechanisms. This divide suggests that existing parties have opened the door to significant shifts in the structure of the party system, either through the emergence of new parties that provoke a realignment or through the collapse of the existing order. It is highly probable that during the next electoral cycle, the Chilean party system will continue to depend on the two traditional coalitions, but the gap between political representation and social demands will expand and deepen the pressure for change.

Rather than exerting energy to resolve these representational shortcomings or reestablish connections with civil society, party elites have emphasized institutional reforms. Siavelis (2016) suggests that reforms focused on eliminating the elitist and disproportional facets of Chile's institutional framework could open the system up to new competitors and promote more effective representation. Although we agree institutional reform often has the potential to facilitate such goals, we are concerned that the reforms in Chile have come too late and are too superficial to reconnect parties with Chile's now-mobilized society. Institutional engineering often sets off a string of unintended consequences and certainly draws policy makers' attention away from the concerns of ordinary citizens. Significant reform efforts have often been the last salvo from entrenched elites seeking to preserve the system through institutional adjustments rather than substantive change. Examples of institutional reforms accelerating rather than arresting linkage decay can be observed in many countries that have experienced party decay and in some that have undergone collapse, including Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, and Italy (Morgan forthcoming b). In Chile the reform process has introduced a series of significant uncertainties for party elites, who are now

navigating new waters amid already fragile representational profiles. The anticorruption measures proposed by a presidential commission have not been applied completely, and the consultation process for a new constitution is still in its initial stages and it will not necessarily be continued by next administrations since its political momentum has weakened. The energy that must be expended on adapting to new institutional incentives is immense, and the possibilities for miscalculations are high. These costs may prove too great for the existing party system to endure.

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Partidos bajo presión: Empleando el marco del declive de vínculos políticos para analizar el sistema de partidos chileno

Resumen: La impresión general que se tiene del sistema de partidos chileno lo caracteriza como altamente institucionalizado. Sin embargo, declives recientes en participación y en partidismo han empezado a cuestionar esta apariencia de estabilidad. Este artículo evalúa la actual situación del sistema de partidos chileno, analizando su capacidad para proveer vínculos políticos. Especificamos un marco teórico para evaluar los tipos de vínculos políticos en el sistema chileno contemporáneo, enfatizando cómo su perfil de representación ha cambiado desde la transición democrática. El análisis sugiere que las dos coaliciones partidarias tradicionales han dejado de ofrecer alternativas claras de políticas y que la representación programática depende crecientemente de la capacidad de respuesta a políticas públicas y de vestigios de antiguas divisiones ideológicas. Restricciones institucionales significativas coaccionan la capacidad partidaria de incorporar demandas de grupos sociales emergentes, mien-

tras que las prácticas clientelares se mantienen como mecanismos complementarios pero no como vínculos medulares. Esta evidencia señala que mientras la representación en Chile no se ha quebrado aún, el sistema porta serias vulnerabilidades.[16]

Palabras clave: América Latina, Chile, vínculos políticos, sistemas de partidos, representación, programático, clientelismo, incorporación de intereses

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